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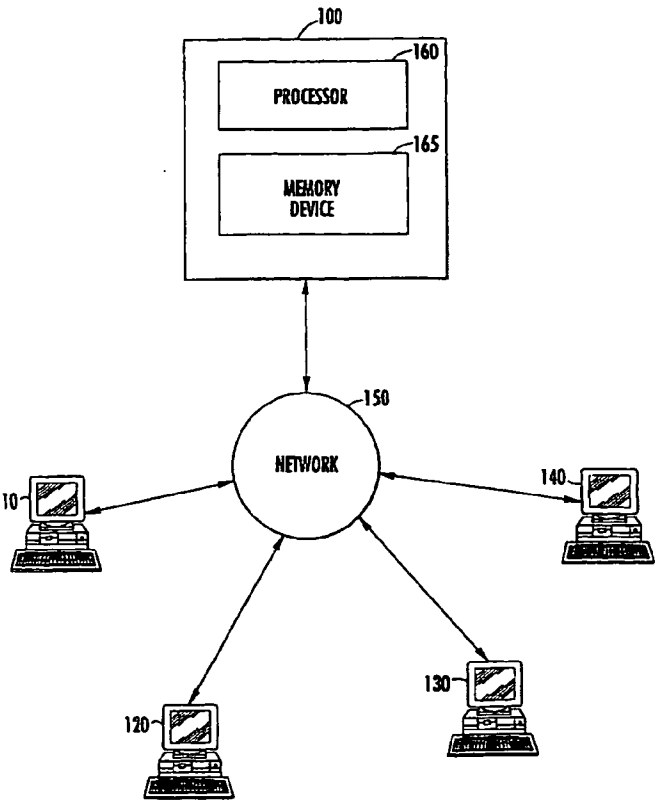
(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CREATING, COMPLETING, PROCESSING AND STORING SURVEYS AND THE RESULTS THEREOF OVER A NETWORK



(57) Abstract: A method and system (100) for creating, completing, processing and storing forms such as surveys, questionnaires, applications, and the results thereof, over a network (150). Initially, a subscriber accesses a subscriber web site of the system and enters or specifies form information which is provided to the system and used to generate an electronic form. The generated form is posted on an end user web site of the system for a predetermined period of time. An end user accesses the end user web site of the system and completes the posted form. The system tallies the results or responses by the end users on a real-time basis. At any point in time after posting the form, the subscriber may access the subscriber web site and check the results of the posted form.

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CREATING, COMPLETING, PROCESSING AND STORING SURVEYS AND THE RESULTS THEREOF OVER A NETWORK

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to electronic surveys, and in particular, to a system and method for electronically creating, completing, processing and storing surveys and the results thereof over a network, such as the Internet.

Description of Related Art

Surveys have been used in a wide range of public and private sector applications to gather information. For example, surveys may gather information concerning reactions to television programs and new products, employee satisfaction, political preferences and virtually an infinite number of other types of information. The results of the surveys are collated to process the information and to develop generalizations based on the information answered by each individual completing the survey.

Surveys may be conducted verbally or in written form. Specifically, a person conducting a survey may ask specific questions of particular individuals in person. An alternative and widely used means for conducting surveys to gather desired information is to distribute printed surveys to a relatively large number of recipients. This solution is beneficial in that the printed surveys may be distributed simultaneously to a relatively large number of individuals.

However, the method still requires that the surveys be distributed to their intended recipients, for example, via hand delivery or mail, and collected after having been completed. In addition, the collected results must be entered in a database and processed, which is time consuming and costly.

A recent system and method for obtaining and collating survey information from a plurality of computer users is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,893,098. The system taught by the patent permits a local user to generate or author a survey which is transmitted, preferably via e-mail, directly to one or more intended respondents. This system is disadvantageous in that it requires the local user to specify or identify each intended respondent via their respective e-mail address to which the survey is to be transmitted. Although predefined address lists may be created so that the local user need only enter the e-mail addresses of end users in a particular group once, this is still inefficient when a large group, for example, 1000 or more employees are expected to participate in the survey. Another problem is that the e-mail list of respondents must constantly be updated, for example, as employees enter or leave a company.

It is therefore desirable to develop a system and method which eliminates the need to transmit surveys to its intended recipients.

Summary of the Invention

An object of the present invention is to provide a system in which subscribers access a subscriber web site of the system to enter or specify information about an electronic form to be posted on an end user web site of the system.

Another object of the invention is to provide a system and method wherein end users access the system at the end user web site to retrieve and complete the posted electronic form, thereby eliminating the need to transmit forms to intended recipients and for the intended recipients to maintain an e-mail address.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a system and method in which the pool of end users need not be preselected or restricted. Any end user may be directed to access the service by visiting the end user web site, thereby generating and storing more results

than necessary. The stored results may be sorted or filtered at a future point in time using different demographic requirements or parameters.

Yet another object of the invention is to receive responses to forms electronically so that they may be readily processed and integrated into the subscriber's database.

It is another object of the invention to provide a system and method in which the end users are capable of remaining anonymous.

The present invention is directed to a system and method that solves the above noted problems associated with conventional systems and methods. In particular, the system in accordance with the invention has both a subscriber web site accessible by the subscriber to the system and an end user web site that is freely accessible to anyone. Form information is entered by a subscriber at the subscriber web site. An electronic form is then generated by the system based on the form information received from the subscriber and posted on the end user web site. End users, to whom the subscriber directs advertisement concerning the end user web site, visit the end user web site and complete one or more posted forms. Responses to the posted form from at least one end user are then electronically received by the system and stored in a memory device. The responses are tallied on a real-time basis as they are received by the system. In addition, the system may also sort or filter through the stored responses based on parameters entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site. The tallied responses or the filtered responses are displayed on the subscriber web site.

In addition, the present invention is directed to a system including a computer for establishing both a subscriber web site and an end user web site. The computer has a processor, a memory device, and an network interface. Form information entered by a subscriber at the subscriber web site is received by the computer and stored in the memory device. The computer, in turn, generates an electronic form based on the form information and posts the generated form on the end user web site. In addition, at the end user web site, the computer also receives responses to the posted form from at least one end user and stores the received responses in the memory device. The processor tallies the received responses on a real-time basis and can filter the stored responses based on received parameters entered by the subscriber at the system subscriber web site. Either the tallied responses or filtered responses are displayed on the subscriber web site.

Brief Description of the Drawing

The foregoing and other features of the present invention will be more readily apparent from the following detailed description and drawings of illustrative embodiments of the invention wherein like reference numbers refer to similar elements throughout the several views and in which:

Figure 1 is an exemplary high-level diagram of a system for creating, completing and processing surveys and the results thereof in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2a is an exemplary flow chart of the basic operation of the system in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2b is an exemplary flow chart providing a more detailed description of the specific operation of the system in receiving the form information used to generate the survey in accordance with the invention;

Figure 3 is an exemplary flow chart describing on line communication and data transfer from the subscriber to a subscriber web site of the system for creating a form;

Figure 4 is an exemplary flow chart describing on line communication and data transfer from an end user to an end user web site of the system for responding to a posted survey;

Figure 5 is an exemplary flow chart describing on line communication and data transfer from the subscriber to a subscriber web site of the system for accessing form results;

Figure 6 is an exemplary subscriber Login screen;

Figure 7a is an exemplary Create/Modify Answer screen for creating a new single answer or modifying an existing single answer;

Figure 7b is an exemplary Single Answer screen providing a summary of the single answers;

Figure 8 is an exemplary Create/Modify Answer Collection screen of a particular answer collection and the single answers assigned to that collection;

Figure 9a is an exemplary Create/Modify Question screen for creating a new single question or modifying an existing single question;

Figure 9b is an exemplary Single Question screen providing a summary of the single questions and associated answer collection;

Figure 10 is an exemplary Create/Modify Question Collection screen of a particular question collection and the single questions assigned to that collection;

Figure 11a is an exemplary Create/Modify Prize screen for creating a new single prize or modifying an existing single prize;

Figure 11b is an exemplary Single Prize screen providing a summary of single prizes;

Figure 12 is an exemplary Create/Modify Prize Collection screen of a particular prize collection and the single prizes assigned to that collection;

Figure 13 is an exemplary Create/Modify Survey Instances screen for creating a new survey or modifying an existing survey;

Figure 14 is an exemplary end user Login Form screen; and

Figures 15a and 15b shown an exemplary end user Registration Form screen.

Detailed Description of the Invention

The following terms used to describe the invention are defined as follows:

"Subscriber" is an individual, group of individuals, business or company that registers with the service or is otherwise permitted to create and post a survey on a web site. A subscriber also has the authority to obtain or check the results of the survey.

"End user" is an individual, business, or company that accesses a web site and completes one or more posted surveys.

"Website" is a server application which accepts connections from client programs, such as browsers, which allow a remote user to access, transmit, store and retrieve information via a network.

"Form" is generically defined as any document for gathering information, such as surveys, applications, and questionnaires.

The discussion of the system and method in accordance with the present invention is directed to creating, completing, processing and storing surveys and the results

thereof over a network. It should be noted, however, that in addition to surveys the invention is also applicable to questionnaires, applications, or any other form used for gathering information. Furthermore, while the system and method in accordance with the present invention is described in the context of the Internet or world wide web, it can also be used in other network environments, such as a local area network (LAN) or intranet, where the system and software are accessible by both subscribers and end users alike from remote locations.

Figure 1 is a high-level diagram of a system or server 100 for creating, completing, processing and storing surveys, and the results thereof, in accordance with the invention. The system 100 includes a processor 160 that is used to run the software applications necessary for creating, completing, processing, storing and displaying a survey and the results thereof. The software applications, the created surveys, the responses to the surveys and the results thereof are stored in an associated memory device 165, which comprises one or more storage elements, such as a RAM and a hard disk (not shown). Although the processor and associated memory device are shown in Figure 1 as two separate elements, it is contemplated and within the scope of the invention for the two elements to be integrated into a single unit.

System 100 is accessed by multiple computers 110, 120, 130, 140 connected through a network 150, such as the Internet. Although only four computers are shown, any number of computers may be connected to the network through known communication interface means, such as an external or a built-in modem (not shown). Subscribers and end users may access the system from any computer terminal throughout the world having appropriate network Internet access and software, such as a web browser. End users access the system by visiting a web site, thereby eliminating the need for subscribers to transmit the survey to intended recipients or for the intended recipients to maintain an e-mail address.

An exemplary flow chart of the basic high-level operation of the system in accordance with the invention is shown in Figure 2a. Initially, in step 200, the system 100 receives at a first web site (subscriber web site) form information for creating an electronic form. The form information is entered by subscribers at remote computer terminals, e.g. terminal 110, and transmitted to the system at the subscriber web site via the network 150. For instance, the form information may include, for example, questions and their associated predefined answers to be included in the form. In step 205, the form information received by

the system is stored in the memory device 165. An electronic form is generated by the system, in step 210, based on the form information and then, in step 215, posted on a second web site (end user web site). The subscriber and end user web sites can, but need not, have the same domain name. In steps 220, 225, end user responses to the posted form from remote computer terminals, e.g. 110, 120, 130, 140, are received by the system 100 at the end user web site and are stored in the memory device 165. System 100 tallies the responses received from the end users on a real-time basis, in step 230, so that the subscribers may obtain the results of the survey at any time after the survey has been posted on the end user web site.

A subscriber invites, directs or solicits end users to visit the end user web site and complete one or more of the posted forms by advertising via print, television, radio, word of mouth and/or any other form of advertising. The subscriber may direct the advertisement of the end user web site only to a particular group or pool of end users that satisfy specific parameters or requirements, such as age, nationality, sex, employment, economic status and political affiliation. However, this may unnecessarily limit the survey results to a set of demographics of interest to the subscriber at a particular point in time. In an alternative embodiment, the subscriber need not preselect the specific pool of end users to which the advertising is directed. This is advantageous in that should the demographics of interest to the subscriber change the electronic survey results may be readily processed to sort or filter out only those responses that meet the new set of requirements. The subscriber at the subscriber web site defines the parameters by which the responses or results of the forms are to be sorted or filtered, if at all. For example, the subscriber, upon request, may obtain the responses or results from all of the end users that have completed the survey. Alternatively, the subscriber may limit the results or responses to a limited pool of end users that satisfy certain predefined requirements or parameters, such as age, race, nationality, sex, education, income, or any combination thereof. In step 235, the system receives at the subscriber web site the parameters entered by the subscriber. Filtering or sorting of the responses of a posted survey is performed in step 240 based on the received parameters entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site. Lastly, in step 245, the tallied or filtered responses are displayed, upon request by the subscriber, on the subscriber web site.

An exemplary flow chart providing a more detailed description of the specific operation of the system in receiving the form information used to generate the survey is shown in Figure 2b. The form information received by the system 100 for creating the survey is entered by the subscriber at one of the remote computer terminals, e.g., 110, 120, 130, 140, and received at the subscriber web site. Preferably, this form information includes content information and display format information pertaining to three broad groups or classifications including answers, questions and prizes. Each broad group or classification of form information includes single items or elements as well as a collection or set of the single items or elements. In a preferred embodiment, the form information includes single answers, answer collections, single questions, question collections, single prizes and prize collections. Content information relates to the text entered by the subscriber for each of these items or elements, that is, the predefined questions and answers to be included in the survey, while the display format information establishes how the content information is to be displayed on the end user web site. The form information pertaining to answers, questions and prizes is preferably entered or specified by the subscriber in that order. It is, however, contemplated and within the intended scope of the invention to enter the form information in any desired order. In steps 250, 252, the system receives and stores form information relating to single answers entered by the subscriber. Thereafter, in step 254, a selection of single answers assigned or defined by the subscriber to a particular answer collection is provided to and stored by the system. A similar procedure is established for questions, in steps 256-260, and for the prizes to be awarded to the end users for completing the surveys, in steps 262-266.

Figure 3 is an exemplary flow chart of the on line communication and data transfer from the subscriber to the system via the subscriber web site for creating a survey. Initially, in step 300, the subscriber accesses the subscriber web site in order to create a survey. A determination is made in step 305 whether the user is a registered subscriber to the system. If the user is not a registered subscriber then, the user registers as a new subscriber and receives a unique identification code in step 310. Alternatively, the subscriber may choose not to have the end user register with the system before accessing a special survey. In step 315, the registered subscriber logs in by entering their unique identification code. An exemplary subscriber Login Form screen is shown in Figure 6. The subscriber enters the

identification code and password, and then clicks on the Login button. Thereafter, the system checks the input and, if it is valid, allows access to the system.

Once the subscriber has properly logged in, the subscriber enters the form information that is processed by the system in order to generate the electronic survey. The form information received by the system 100 for creating the survey is entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site. In a preferred embodiment, the subscriber first enters form information concerning the answers before that of the questions. This is advantageous since some single answers or collections of answers may be applicable to multiple questions. It is, however, contemplated that the ordering in which the form information is entered or provided by the subscriber may be changed. The single answers are entered one at a time by the subscriber at the subscriber web site, in step 320. Single answers represent the answers to questions to be provided in the survey. Two types of single answers may be defined by the subscriber at the subscriber web site. The first category of single answers are predefined answers, wherein an end user selects one answer from among multiple predefined answers associated with a particular question. A second category of single answers provides a data entry field in which the end user may enter answer text. These two categories of single answers may be used in combination.

Figure 7a is an exemplary Create/Modify Answer screen for creating a new single answer or modifying an existing single answer. A subscriber enters the predefined answer text in data entry field 55. The text field box 56, when selected by the subscriber, displays a data entry field, either by itself or proximate to a predefined answer. Figure 7b is an exemplary Single Answer screen providing a summary of previously entered single answers and the date each single answer was created. From this menu the subscriber may select one of the single answers to be edited and then click the associated Modify button. Other options available to the subscriber include creating a new single answer by selecting the Create button. If the single answers are correct the subscriber selects the Next button to advance to the following screen.

In step 325 of Figure 3, the subscriber may select, assign or group two or more single answers to an answer collection that represents the answers associated with a particular question in the survey. An answer collection includes at least two single answers to be

displayed with a particular question of the survey. In a preferred embodiment, the system, by default, displays the single answers representing a particular answer collection in the sequential order in which the single answers were selected by the subscriber. This ordering, however, may be modified by the subscriber, as desired. Figure 8 is an exemplary Create/Modify Answer Collection screen for a particular answer collection entitled "Range: 0-6+ by 1's" which includes five single answers. In Figure 8 the Select tab has been selected to choose which single answers are to be included in the answer set. Other available options include the Order tab which when selected displays an Order column in place of where the Selected column is now display. The ordering of the answers may be modified as desired by the subscriber. The General tab is used to copy or rename the answer collection.

Next, the subscriber enters content and display format information relating to one or more single questions to be included in the survey. In step 330, single question information entered by the subscriber via the subscriber web site is received by the system. Included in the information relating to a particular single question is its associated answer collection. The subscriber, in step 335, assigns each single question an associated answer collection.

In addition to specifying the content and display format information relating to a single question, the subscriber may also enter a comment to be displayed and specify the location in which it is to be displayed, that is, immediately before, or after, a particular question. For example, the subscriber may enter as a comment, instructions to the end user in responding to a particular question or closing remarks, such as "Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey." A further feature or option that may be exercised by the subscriber is to select whether a particular question has only one correct answer. Often times only one answer from among the answer collection associated with a particular single question will be correct. If a particular answer is identified as the correct answer then it will be identified, for example, by a red check mark, when the subscriber checks the responses of a particular end user at the subscriber web site.

Figure 9a is an exemplary Create/Modify Question screen for creating a new single question or modifying an existing single question. The subscriber enters the question text in data entry field 142 and provides a descriptive name in box 143. A list of available

answer collections is preferably displayed as a drop down menu 144 from which the subscriber can select one answer collection. An exemplary Single Question screen providing a summary of the single questions and associated answer collection is shown in Figure 9b. In particular, the list provides a Question Description, the Question itself, its associated Answer Collection and the date in which the single question was created. Similar to that of the single questions described above, the subscriber may select a particular single question followed by the Modify button to edit or change one of the single questions. From this menu the subscriber also has the option of clicking the Create button to generate a new single question. If the single questions have been properly entered, the subscriber selects the Next button to advance to the following screen.

One or more single questions are then assigned by the subscriber to a question collection, in step 340 of Figure 3. As with the answer collection, in a preferred embodiment, the system, by default, displays the single questions of a particular question collection in the sequential order in which they were selected by the subscriber. This default ordering may be modified by the subscriber, as desired. In a preferred embodiment, after defining a question collection the subscriber may preview how the questions and associated answer collections will be displayed on the end user web site. An exemplary Create/Modify Question Collection screen for modifying an existing question collection entitled "XYZ Company Satisfaction Survey" and its associated single questions is shown in Figure 10. The particular collection question is entitled "XYZ Company Satisfaction Survey" and an associated descriptive title of "Customer Satisfaction - XYZ Company 1999-03-04 4 Questions". As shown in Figure 10 this particular question collection is comprised of four questions, with the descriptive title and date of creation provided adjacent each single question in the collection.

To entice or encourage end users to complete the surveys posted on the end user web site, the subscriber may, if desired, offer prizes for completing the survey. An exemplary Create/Modify Prize screen for modifying an existing single prize of $100 cash and a Single Prize screen listing three previously entered single prizes are shown in Figures 11a and 11b, respectively. In Figure 11a, the descriptive name for the prize is provided in the Prize data entry field along and its associated monetary value is entered in the Value data entry field. An exemplary summary or listing of three single prizes for a particular prize collection is shown

in Figure 11b. Any one of the single prizes may be selected and then the associated Modify button clicked on by the subscriber to edit the previously entered data. In addition, new single prizes may be generated by selecting the Create button. After all of the information has been properly entered, the subscriber selects the Next button to advance to the following screen.

In step 345 of Figure 3, the subscriber enters at least one single prize, such as a monetary award or a free consultation. Multiple single prizes may be grouped together, as defined or assigned by the subscriber, into a prize collection or set, in step 350. Within a particular prize collection or set, the subscriber may specify the available quantity of each prize. Figure 12 is an exemplary prize collection entitled "Special Prizes : $100, $50, $20" and the single prizes included in that collection. As previously described above with respect to answer collections and question collections, the data associated with any of the single prizes in the collection. Other options available to the subscriber, in addition to selecting those single prizes to be included in the prize collection, include modifying the sequential order in which the prizes are arranged and copying or renaming of the prize collection by selecting the Order and General tabs, respectively.

The form information pertaining to the questions, answers and prizes, has now been entered or specified by the subscriber via the subscriber web site. Before the survey is displayed or posted on the end user web site, in step 355 of Figure 3, the subscriber specifies a predetermined time period, that is, a starting time and an ending time, over which the survey is to be posted on the end user web site. In step 360, the subscriber defines the survey to include selected question collections and their associated answer collections. If desired, the subscriber may also select a prize collection to be awarded. In addition to the prizes, questions and answers, the subscriber may specify that additional information be displayed in the survey. For example, the subscriber may indicate that the name and/or logo of the sponsor or subscriber appear at the beginning of the survey. The subscriber may also provide an opening remark or message to appear after the sponsor's name and/or logo but before the questions and answers. Likewise, a closing remark or message may be provided to be displayed at the end of the survey after the last question and its associated answer collection. An end user may wish to visit the web site of the sponsor of the survey directly from the survey itself. A subscriber can specify that the URL address of the sponsor's web site is to be displayed on the survey so

that the end user, by clicking on the displayed web site, may advance to that site without having to recall or type in the address.

In step 365, the subscriber may prompt the end user to provide personal information, such as their social security number and/or e-mail address. The personal information requested by the subscriber may be tailored for each particular survey. Prompts for personal information are displayed as part of the registration form to be filled out by the end user upon visiting the end user web site, but prior to accessing a posted survey. In a preferred embodiment, the subscriber may distinguish between two types of personal information requested, "required" versus "optional". Access to the survey is denied if the end user fails to provide a response to a prompt that is "required" by the subscriber. Alternatively, the subscriber can decline to prompt the end user to provide any personal information, thereby maintaining the anonymity of the end user.

The subscriber may also designate the survey as "special" and assign it a unique survey code identification. In so doing, the system will prompt the end user, upon accessing the end user web site, to enter a unique survey code identification before gaining access to the survey. This feature or option permits the subscriber to restrict or limit the pool of end users that complete a particular survey to only those end users to whom the subscriber has advertised the unique survey code identification.

Figure 13 is an exemplary Create/Modify Survey Instances screen for creating a new survey or modifying an existing survey. The starting and ending dates are selected from the drop down menus. In addition, the subscriber selects whether the survey is to be a special survey requiring that the end user identify a unique survey code identification. A prize collection may, but need not be selected, followed by the question collection of the questions to be provided in the survey. The prize and question collections are displayed in the example by the descriptive title. Although only one prize collection and one question collection are shown the pull down menu preferably displays a list of all available prize collections and questions collections. In the example shown in Figure 13, the "XYZ Company Satisfaction survey: Customer Satisfaction |XYZ Company|1999|03|04 4 Questions" selected as the question collection includes the four questions shown in Figure 10. The Show Sponsor box when selected by the subscriber displays the sponsor's (subscribers) name at the top of the

survey. Preliminary instructions used to assist the end user in completing the survey may be provided in the Instructions data entry field. In the following section entitled "For Special Surveys and Other Contests" the subscriber can select that the URL of the sponsor (subscriber) be displayed on the survey by providing the URL and assigning it a descriptive name to be displayed on the survey when viewed by the end user. The end user while completing a posted survey on the end user web site may advance directly to the subscriber's web site by clicking on the URL descriptive name. A survey code may be specified by the subscriber thereby restricting access of the end users to only those that are aware of the unique survey code identification. The additional personal information requested in the multiple fields at the end of the screen are displayed to the end user while registering with the service. As previously indicated, the subscriber may specify whether the personal information is "required" or "optional". The end user can decline to answer only "optional" prompts, otherwise access to the survey is denied. If the subscriber checks the Bypass Registration box at the end of the screen, the end user will not be required to register with the system. The system can generate on the subscriber web site a preview of a survey as it would appear to the end user on the end user web site so that the subscriber may verify its content.

The created survey is then posted on the end user web site for the predetermined time period. While posted, end users to whom the subscriber has directed, invited or solicited through advertisements, may access the end user web site and complete or respond to one or more of the surveys. Figure 4 is an exemplary flow chart describing on line communication and data transfer between an end user accessing an end user web site and the system for responding to and completing a posted survey. In steps 400, 405, the end user accesses the end user web site and selects from among one of the posted surveys. As previously described, if the survey to be completed has been designated by the subscriber as "special", then the end user must identify the survey by entering its unique survey code identification. A determination is made in step 410 whether the end user has previously registered with the system. If the end user is not registered, then in step 415 the new end user registers with the system. An exemplary end user Registration Form is shown in Figures 15a and 15b. The user is prompted to enter information such as a user name and a password. Additional information, such as a secret question and its associated answer may be requested as a back up in case the

end user forgets their password. Demographic information, such as sex, number of children marital status, etc. may also be requested by the subscriber. Still more information may be prompted to be supplied by the end user, such as the end user's e-mail address. It is clear that the subscriber may tailor the information requested to suit their own needs. Then in step 420 of Figure 4, the end user enters the appropriate registration information.

Figure 14 is an exemplary end user Login Form. If the end user is not registered they select the Register Now text whereby the system advances to the Registration Form shown in Figures 15a, 15b. Otherwise, registered end users enter their user name and password in the data entry fields provided. Access to the selected survey is permitted when the system verifies that the end user registration information is correct. Then, in step 425, the end user completes the survey by entering responses to the questions provided therein.

The final stage in the process is for the subscriber to access the subscriber web site to obtain the results of the survey. Figure 5 is an exemplary flow chart describing on line communication and data transfer from the subscriber to the subscriber web site of the system for accessing form results. In step 500, the subscriber accesses the subscriber web site. Thereafter, in step 505, the subscriber may define parameters by which the responses to the posted survey are to be filtered. Alternatively, the subscriber may request the responses from the entire pool of end users. In a preferred embodiment, the results or responses to the surveys are tallied on a real-time basis so that the subscriber may obtain the results at any time after posting the survey and any number of times, as desired.

The screens and menus including the names, arrangement and information requested therein are for illustration purposes only. One of skill in the art would appreciate that these displays may be modified as desired without changing the nature of the invention.

Thus, while there have been shown, described, and pointed out fundamental novel features of the invention as applied to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood that various omissions, substitutions, and changes in the form and details of the devices illustrated, and in their operation, may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, it is expressly intended that all combinations of those elements and/or steps which perform substantially the same function, in substantially the same way, to achieve the same results are within the scope of the invention.

Substitutions of elements from one described embodiment to another are also fully intended and contemplated. It is also to be understood that the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale, but that they are merely conceptual in nature. It is the intention, therefore, to be limited only as indicated by the scope of the claims appended hereto.

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for using a system for creating, completing, processing, storing and displaying electronic forms and responses thereto over a network, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving at a subscriber web site form information entered by a subscriber for creating said form;

storing the form information received from the subscriber web site;

generating said form based on the form information entered by the subscriber; and

posting the generated form on an end user web site.

2. A method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving responses to the posted form from at least one end user; and

storing the received responses.

3. A method in accordance with claim 2, further comprising tallying of the responses on a real-time basis.

4. A method in accordance with claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

receiving at the subscriber web site parameters entered by the subscriber for sorting through the stored responses; and

filtering the stored responses based on the received parameters entered by the subscriber.

5. A method in accordance with claim 4, further comprising displaying on the subscriber web site at least one of the tallied responses and the filtered responses.

6. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said form is one of a survey, a questionnaire and an application.

7. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said information includes at least one of content information and display format information.

8. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said form information relates to at least one of answers, questions and prizes.

9. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said form is a survey and said form information includes at least one of: (i) at least one single answer, (ii) at least one collection of single answers, (iii) at least one single question, (iv) at least one collection of single questions, (v) at least one prize, and (vi) at least one collection of prizes.

10. A method in accordance with claim 9, wherein said receiving of form information step comprises the steps of:

receiving a plurality of single answers entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site;

storing the received plural single answers in a memory device;

receiving at least one single question entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site; and

storing the received at least one single question in the memory device.

11. A method in accordance with claim 10, wherein said receiving of information step further comprises:

receiving at least one single prize entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site; and

storing the received at least one single prize in the memory device.

12. A method in accordance with claim 9, wherein said receiving of information step comprises the steps of:

receiving a plurality of single answers entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site;

storing the received plural single answers in a memory device;

receiving an answer collection as defined by the subscriber in response to selecting at least two of said plural single answers;

storing the received answer collection in the memory device;

receiving at least one single question and its associated answer collection entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site;

storing the received at least one single question in the memory device;

receiving a question collection as defined by the subscriber in response to selecting at least one single question assigned to the question collection; and

storing the question collection in the memory device.

13. A method in accordance with claim 12, wherein said receiving of information step further comprises:

receiving at least one single prize indication entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site;

storing the received at least one single prize indication in the memory device;

receiving a prize collection as defined by the subscriber in response to selecting at least one single prize indication assigned to the prize collection; and

storing the prize collection in the memory device.

14. A method in accordance with claim 13, wherein said receiving of information step further comprises receiving an answer collection associated with the question collection as defined by the subscriber at the subscriber web site.

15. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said step of posting the form comprises the steps of:

receiving a predetermined time period entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site for which the generated form is to be posted on the end user web site; and

displaying the generated form on the end user web site for the predetermined time period.

16. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the subscriber and end user web sites have the same domain name.

17. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the subscriber and end user web sites have different domain names.

18. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said network is one of the Internet, a local area network, and an intranet.

19. A system for creating, completing, processing, storing and displaying an electronic form and responses thereof over a network, comprising:

a computer for establishing a subscriber web site and an end user web site, said computer having a processor, a memory device, and an network interface, said computer having means for receiving form information entered by a subscriber at the subscriber web site, storing the form information in the memory device, generating the electronic form based on the form information, and posting the generated form on the end user web site.

20. A system in accordance with claim 19, wherein said computer receives at the end user web site responses to the posted form from at least one end user and stores the received responses in the memory device.

21. A system in accordance with claim 20, wherein said computer tallies the response on a real-time basis.

22. A system in accordance with claim 21, wherein said computer receives parameters entered by the subscriber at the subscriber web site and filters the stored responses based on the received parameters.

23. A system in accordance with claim 22, wherein said computer displays on the subscriber web site at least one of the tallied responses and the filtered responses.

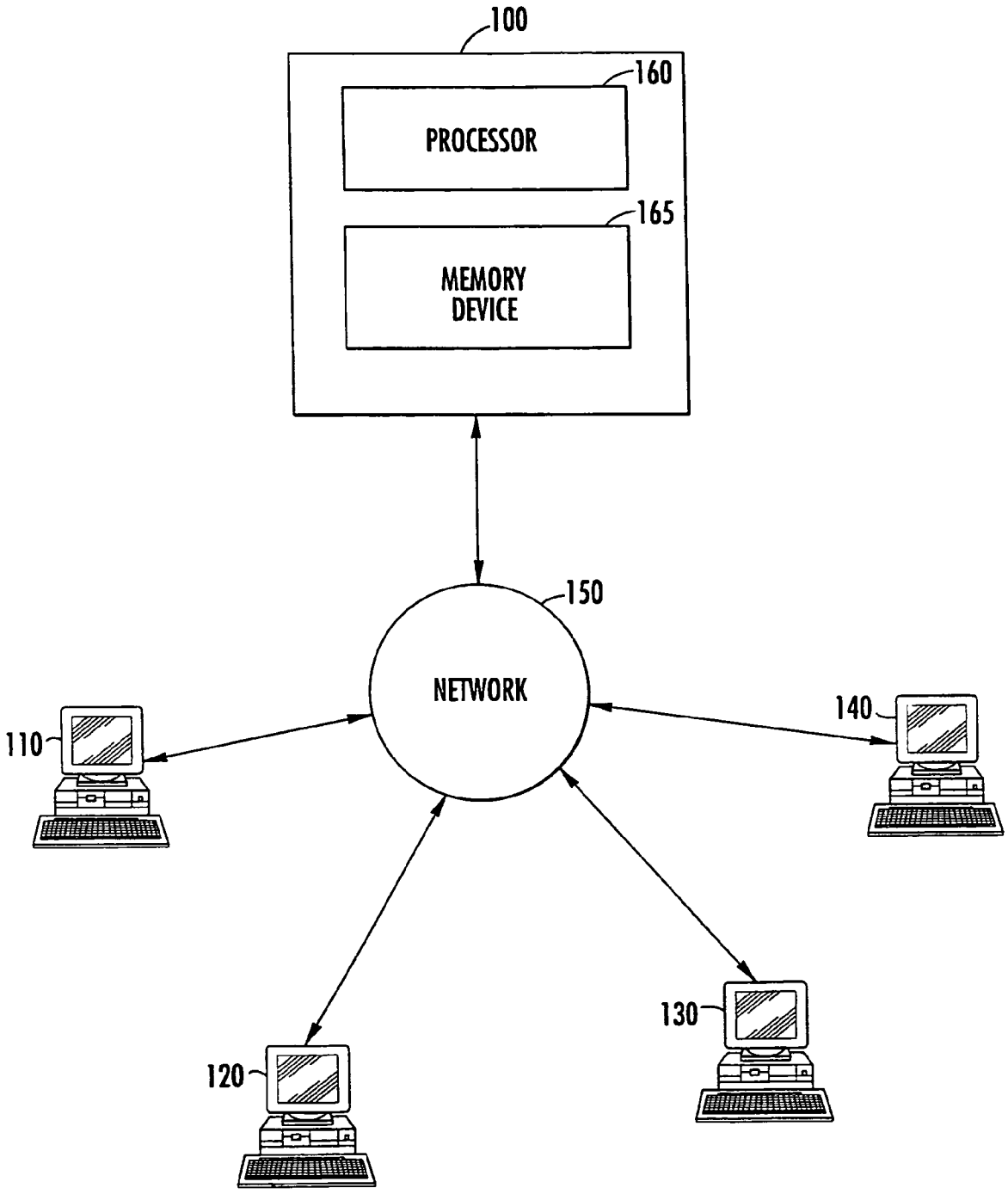

100
160
PROCESSOR
165
MEMORY DEVICE
150
NETWORK
110
120
130
140

FIG. 1.

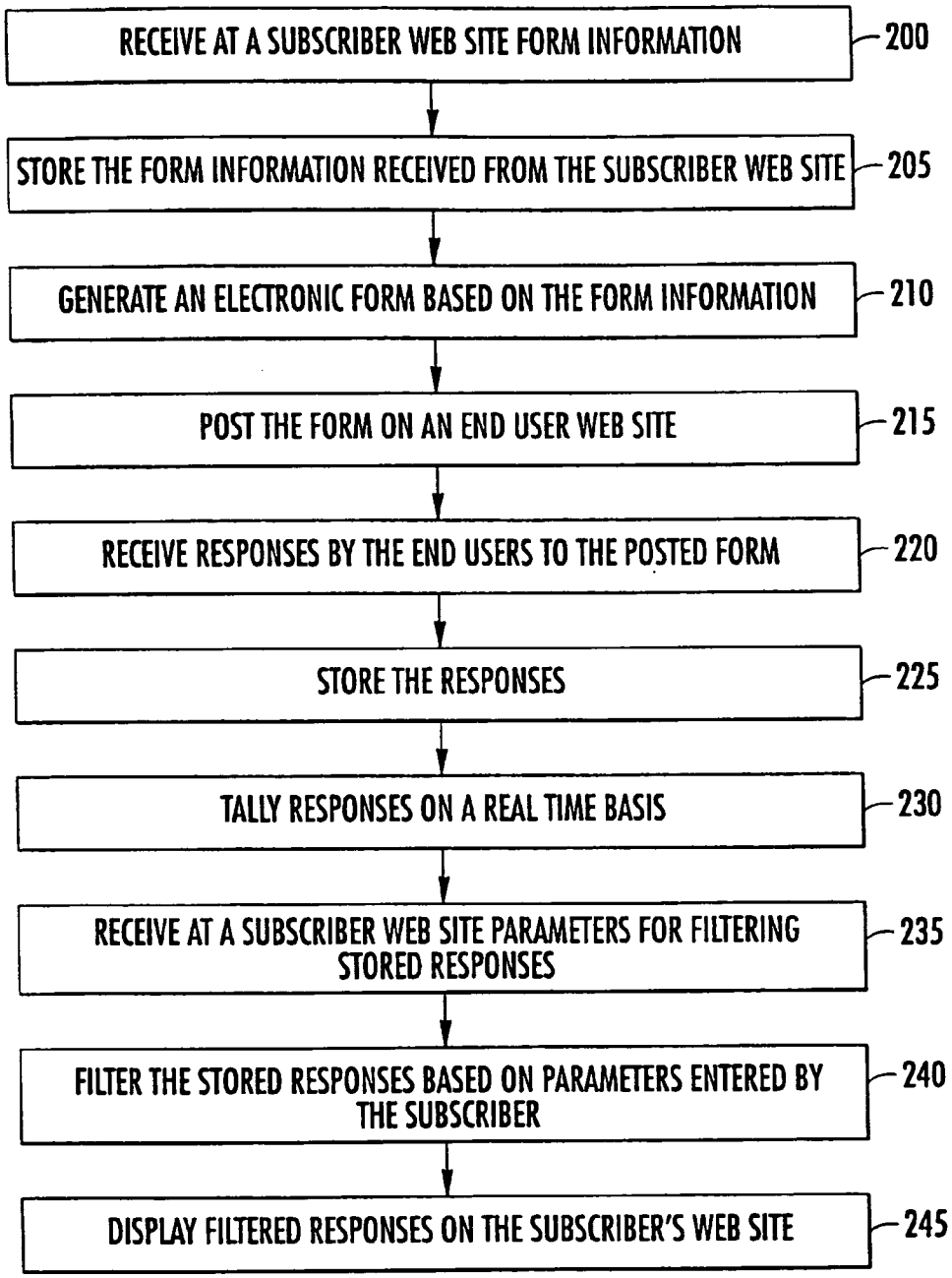

RECEIVE AT A SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE FORM INFORMATION
200
STORE THE FORM INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE
205
GENERATE AN ELECTRONIC FORM BASED ON THE FORM INFORMATION
210
POST THE FORM ON AN END USER WEB SITE
215
RECEIVE RESPONSES BY THE END USERS TO THE POSTED FORM
220
STORE THE RESPONSES
225
TALLY RESPONSES ON A REAL TIME BASIS
230
RECEIVE AT A SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE PARAMETERS FOR FILTERING STORED RESPONSES
235
FILTER THE STORED RESPONSES BASED ON PARAMETERS ENTERED BY THE SUBSCRIBER
240
DISPLAY FILTERED RESPONSES ON THE SUBSCRIBER'S WEB SITE
245

FIG. 2a.

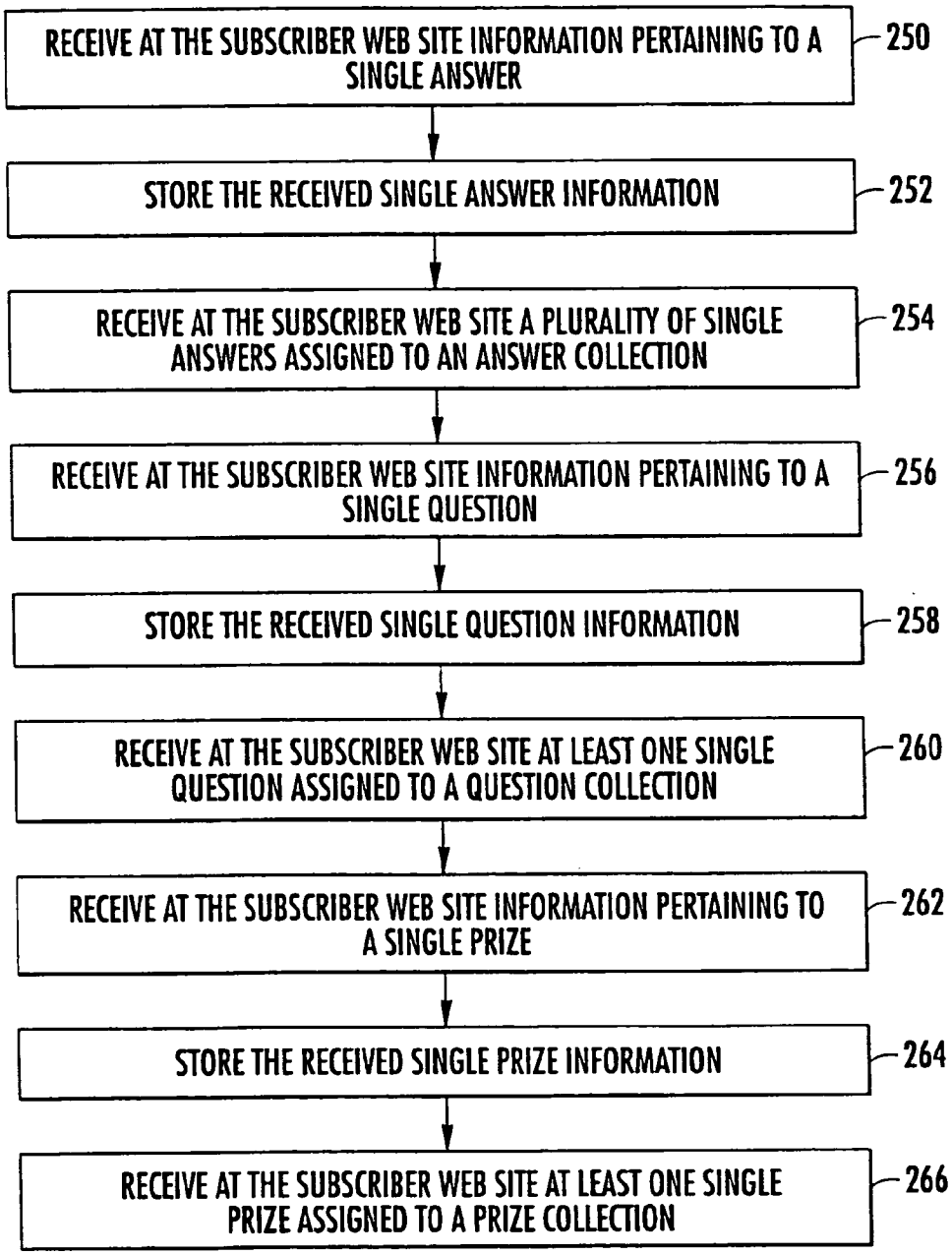
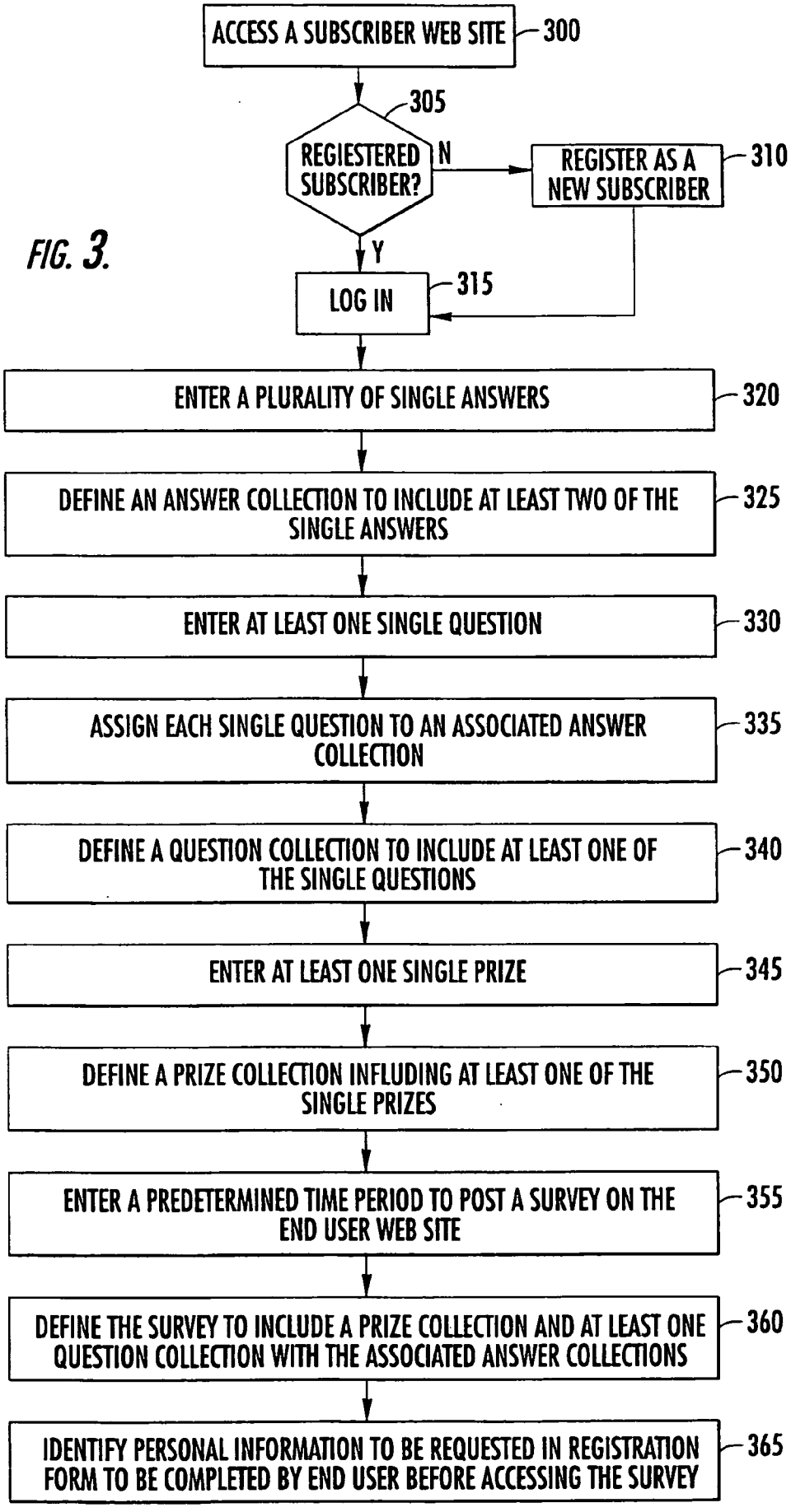

RECEIVE AT THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO A SINGLE ANSWER
250
STORE THE RECEIVED SINGLE ANSWER INFORMATION
252
RECEIVE AT THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE A PLURALITY OF SINGLE ANSWERS ASSIGNED TO AN ANSWER COLLECTION
254
RECEIVE AT THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO A SINGLE QUESTION
256
STORE THE RECEIVED SINGLE QUESTION INFORMATION
258
RECEIVE AT THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE AT LEAST ONE SINGLE QUESTION ASSIGNED TO A QUESTION COLLECTION
260
RECEIVE AT THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO A SINGLE PRIZE
262
STORE THE RECEIVED SINGLE PRIZE INFORMATION
264
RECEIVE AT THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE AT LEAST ONE SINGLE PRIZE ASSIGNED TO A PRIZE COLLECTION
266

FIG. 2b.

FIG. 3.


ACCESS A SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE
300
305
REGIESTERED SUBSCRIBER?
N
REGISTER AS A NEW SUBSCRIBER
310
Y
LOG IN
315
ENTER A PLURALITY OF SINGLE ANSWERS
320
DEFINE AN ANSWER COLLECTION TO INCLUDE AT LEAST TWO OF THE SINGLE ANSWERS
325
ENTER AT LEAST ONE SINGLE QUESTION
330
ASSIGN EACH SINGLE QUESTION TO AN ASSOCIATED ANSWER COLLECTION
335
DEFINE A QUESTION COLLECTION TO INCLUDE AT LEAST ONE OF THE SINGLE QUESTIONS
340
ENTER AT LEAST ONE SINGLE PRIZE
345
DEFINE A PRIZE COLLECTION INFLUDING AT LEAST ONE OF THE SINGLE PRIZES
350
ENTER A PREDETERMINED TIME PERIOD TO POST A SURVEY ON THE END USER WEB SITE
355
DEFINE THE SURVEY TO INCLUDE A PRIZE COLLECTION AND AT LEAST ONE QUESTION COLLECTION WITH THE ASSOCIATED ANSWER COLLECTIONS
360
IDENTIFY PERSONAL INFORMATION TO BE REQUESTED IN REGISTRATION FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY END USER BEFORE ACCESSING THE SURVEY
365

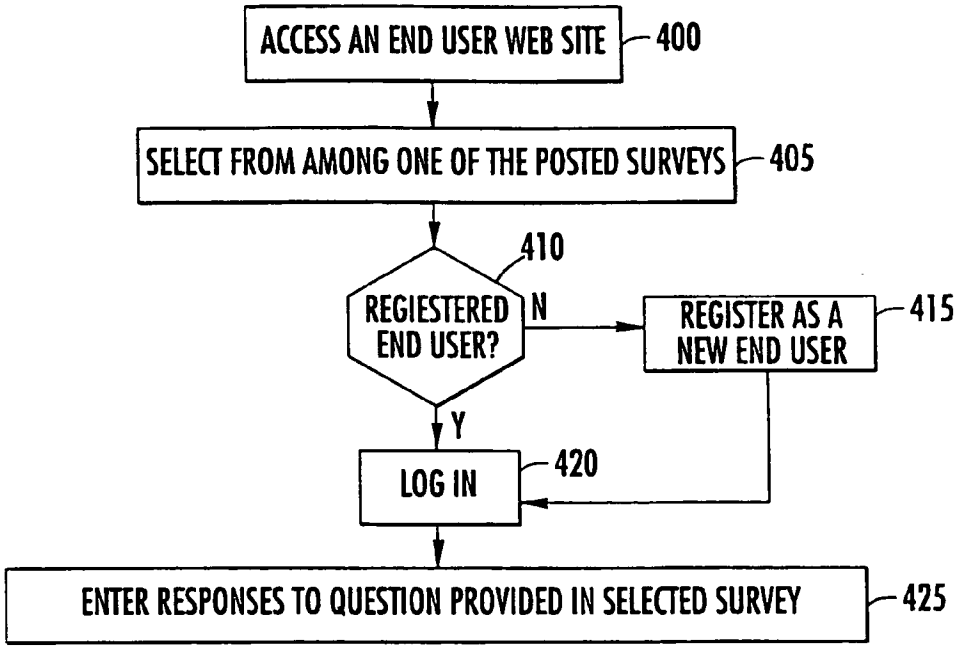

ACCESS AN END USER WEB SITE
400
SELECT FROM AMONG ONE OF THE POSTED SURVEYS
405
410
REGIESTERED END USER?
N
REGISTER AS A NEW END USER
415
Y
LOG IN
420
ENTER RESPONSES TO QUESTION PROVIDED IN SELECTED SURVEY
425

FIG. 4.

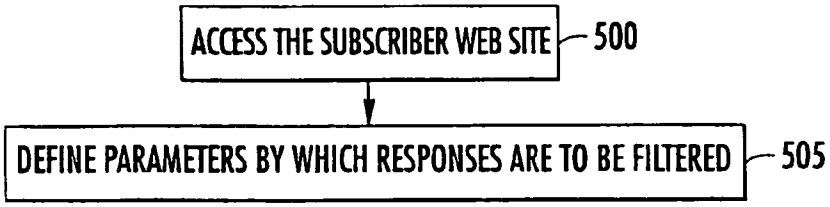

ACCESS THE SUBSCRIBER WEB SITE
500
DEFINE PARAMETERS BY WHICH RESPONSES ARE TO BE FILTERED
505

FIG. 5.

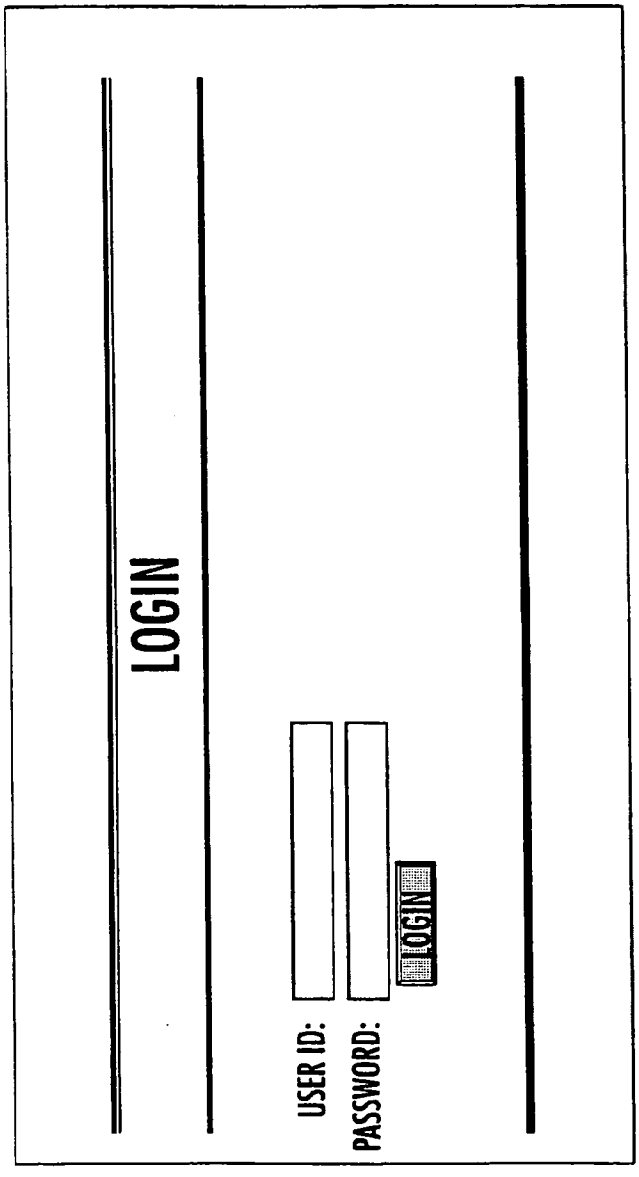


FIG. 6.

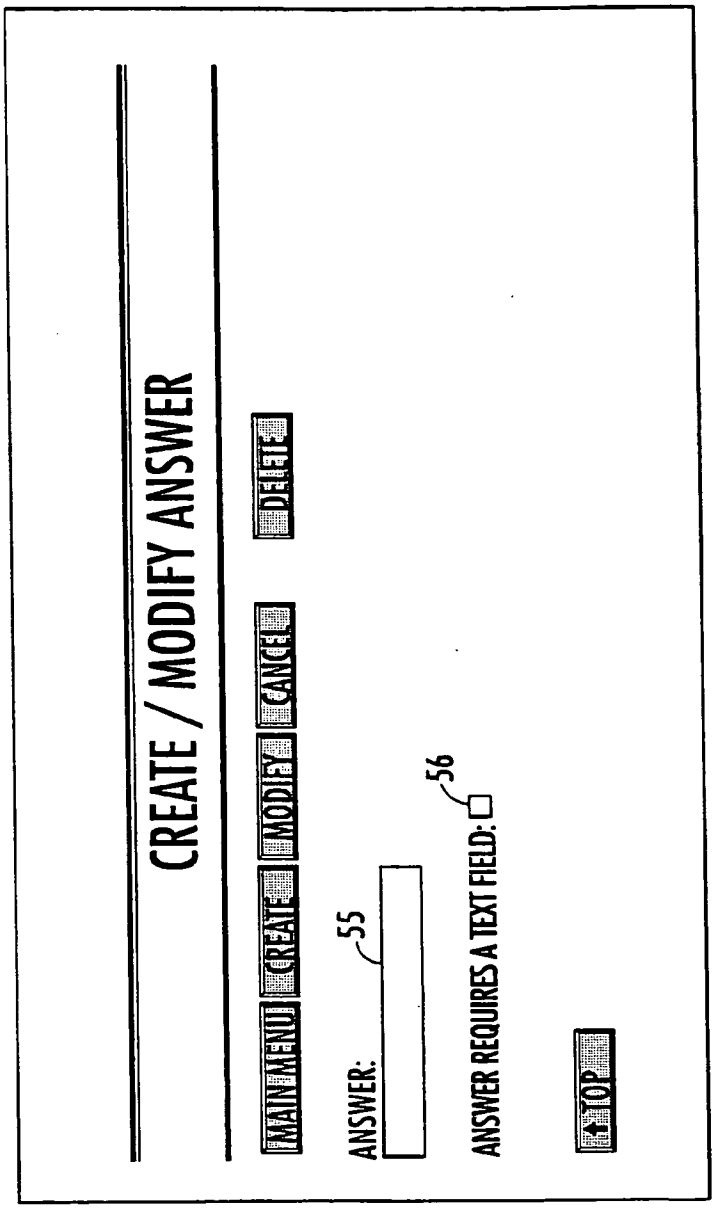

CREATE / MODIFY ANSWER
MAIN MENU
CREATE
MODIFY
CANCEL
DELETE
ANSWER:
55
ANSWER REQUIRES A TEXT FIELD:
56
TOP

FIG. 7a.

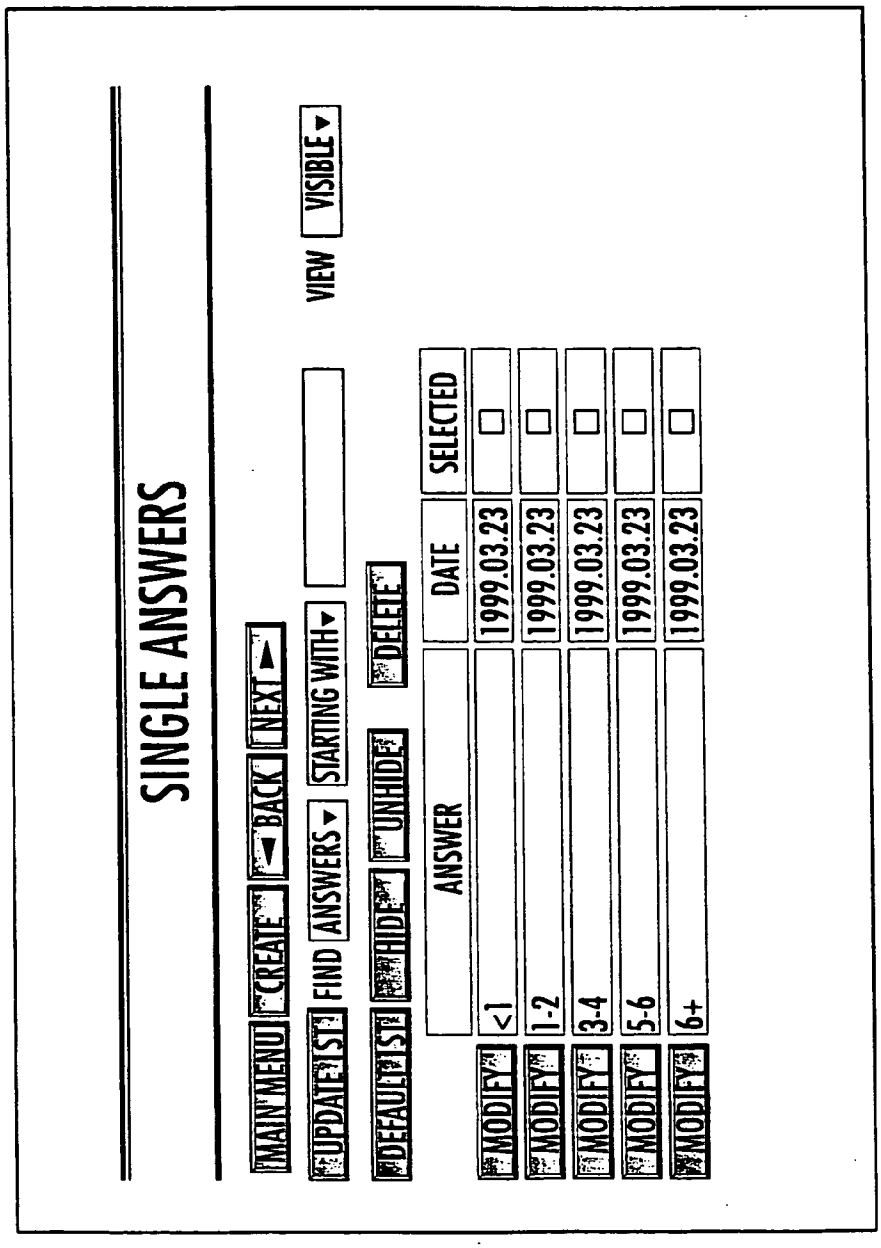

SINGLE ANSWERS
MAIN MENU
CREATE
BACK
NEXT
UPDATE LIST
FIND ANSWERS
STARTING WITH
VIEW
VISIBLE
DEFAULT LIST
HIDE
UNHIDE
DELETE
ANSWER
DATE
SELECTED
MODIFY
<1
1999.03.23
MODIFY
1-2
1999.03.23
MODIFY
3-4
1999.03.23
MODIFY
5-6
1999.03.23
MODIFY
6+
1999.03.23

FIG. 7b.

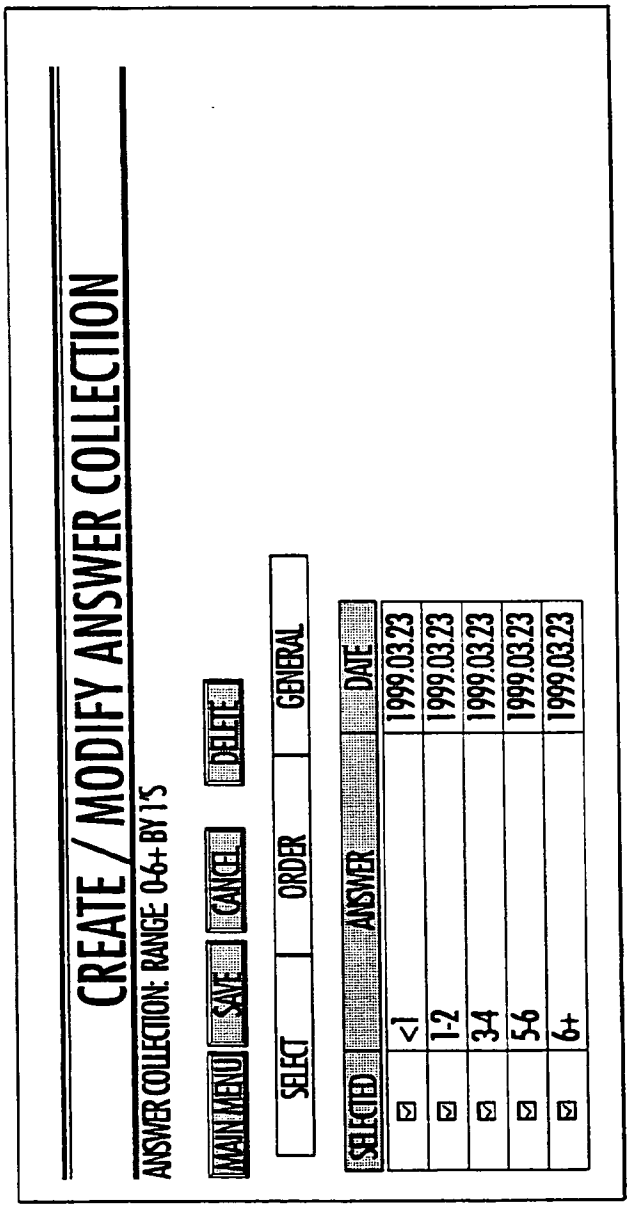

CREATE / MODIFY ANSWER COLLECTION
ANSWER COLLECTION: RANGE: 06+ BY 15
MAIN MENU
SAVE
CANCEL
DELETE
SELECT
ORDER
GENERAL
SELECTED
ANSWER
DATE
<1
1999.03.23
1-2
1999.03.23
3-4
1999.03.23
5-6
1999.03.23
6+
1999.03.23

FIG. 8.

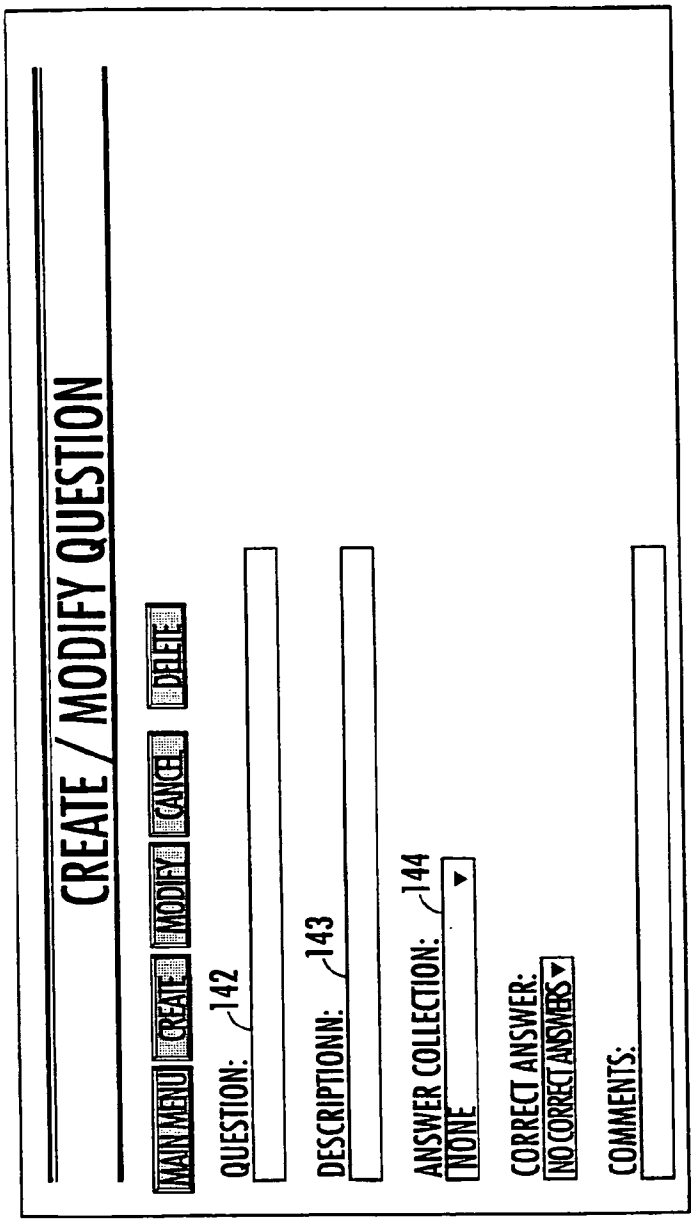

CREATE / MODIFY QUESTION
MAIN MENU
CREATE
MODIFY
CANCEL
DELETE
QUESTION: 142
DESCRIPTIONN: 143
ANSWER COLLECTION: 144
NONE
CORRECT ANSWER:
NO CORRECT ANSWERS
COMMENTS:

FIG. 9a.

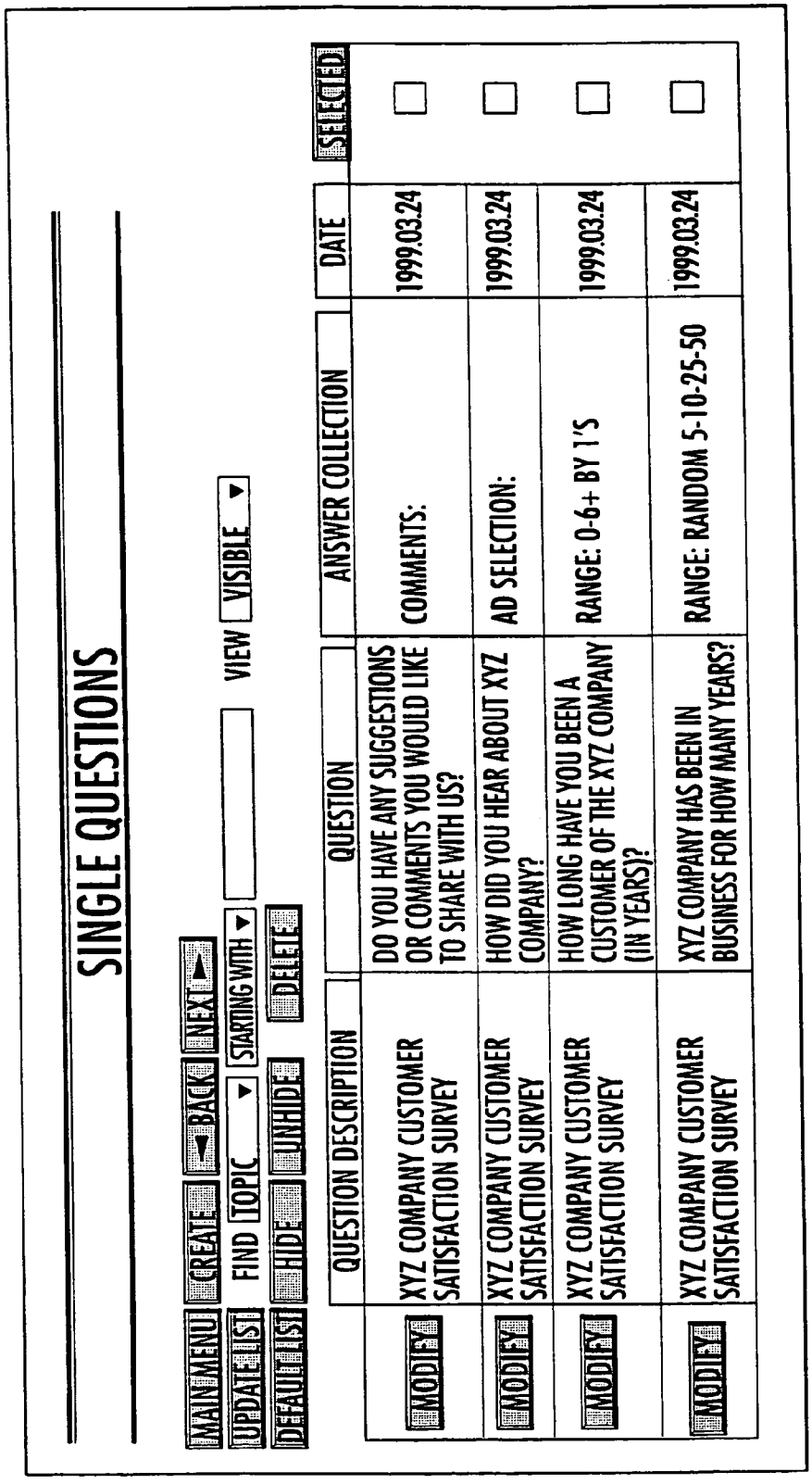

SINGLE QUESTIONS
MAIN MENU
CREATE
BACK
NEXT
UPDATE LIST
FIND TOPIC
STARTING WITH
VIEW VISIBLE
DEFAULT LIST
HIDE
UNHIDE
DELETE
QUESTION DESCRIPTION
QUESTION
ANSWER COLLECTION
DATE
SELECTED
MODIFY
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS OR COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH US?
COMMENTS:
1999.03.24
MODIFY
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT XYZ COMPANY?
AD SELECTION:
1999.03.24
MODIFY
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A CUSTOMER OF THE XYZ COMPANY (IN YEARS)?
RANGE: 0-6+ BY 1'S
1999.03.24
MODIFY
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
XYZ COMPANY HAS BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR HOW MANY YEARS?
RANGE: RANDOM 5-10-25-50
1999.03.24

FIG. 9b.

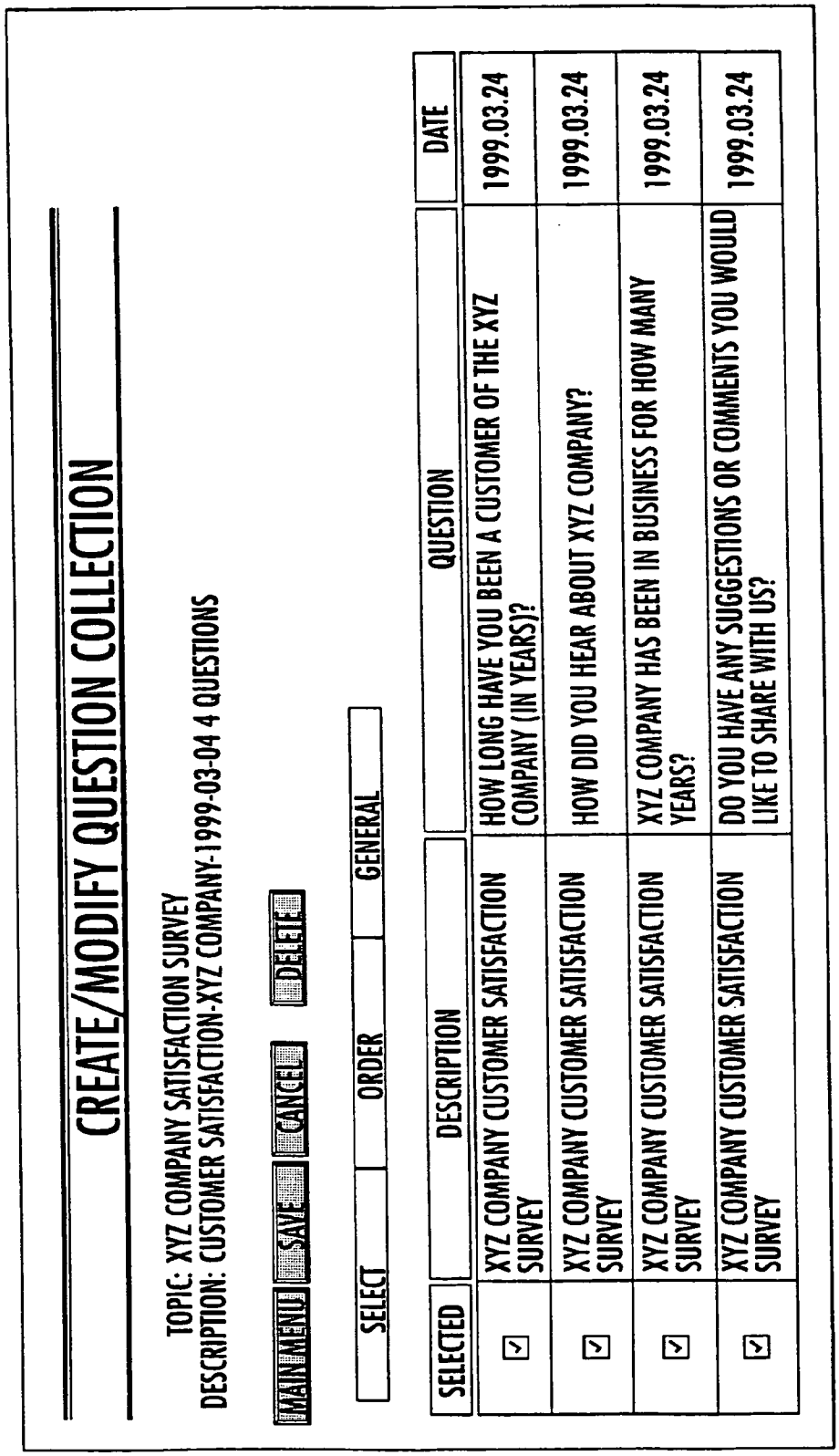

CREATE/MODIFY QUESTION COLLECTION
TOPIC: XYZ COMPANY SATISFACTION SURVEY
DESCRIPTION: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION-XYZ COMPANY-1999-03-04 4 QUESTIONS
MAIN MENU
SAVE
CANCEL
DELETE
SELECT
ORDER
GENERAL
SELECTED
DESCRIPTION
QUESTION
DATE
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A CUSTOMER OF THE XYZ COMPANY (IN YEARS)?
1999.03.24
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT XYZ COMPANY?
1999.03.24
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
XYZ COMPANY HAS BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR HOW MANY YEARS?
1999.03.24
XYZ COMPANY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS OR COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH US?
1999.03.24

FIG. 10.

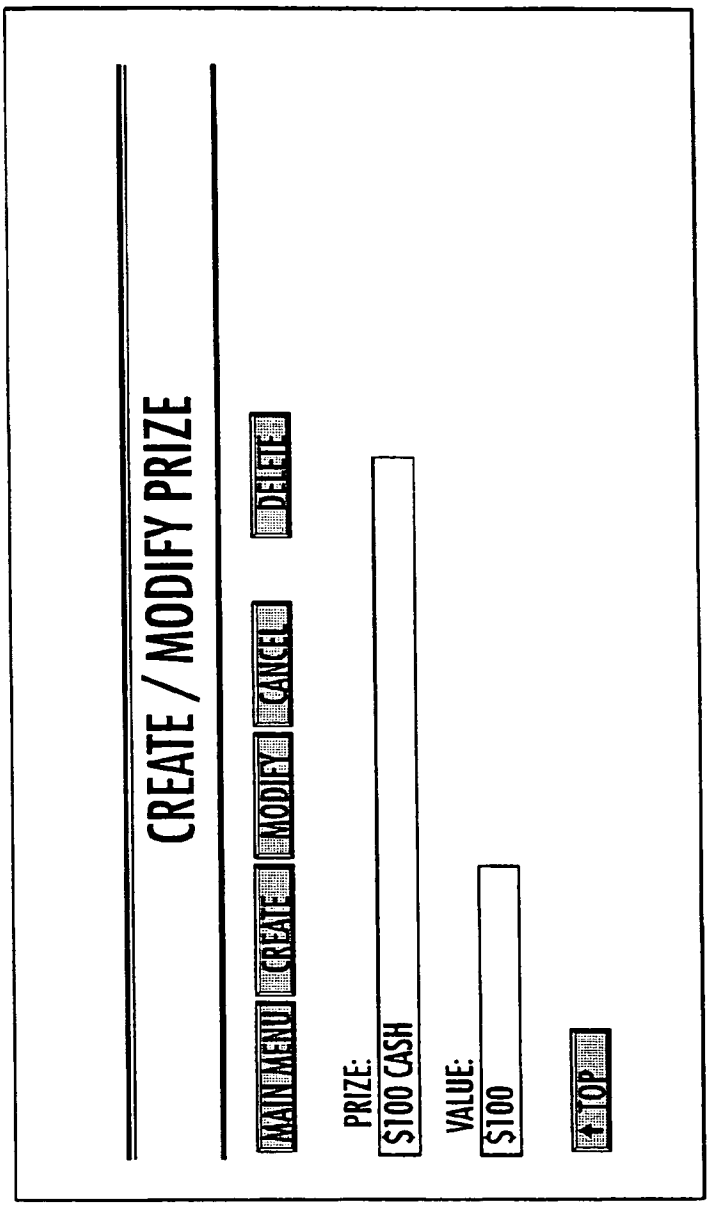

CREATE / MODIFY PRIZE
MAIN MENU
CREATE
MODIFY
CANCEL
DELETE
PRIZE:
$100 CASH
VALUE:
$100
TOP

FIG. 11a.

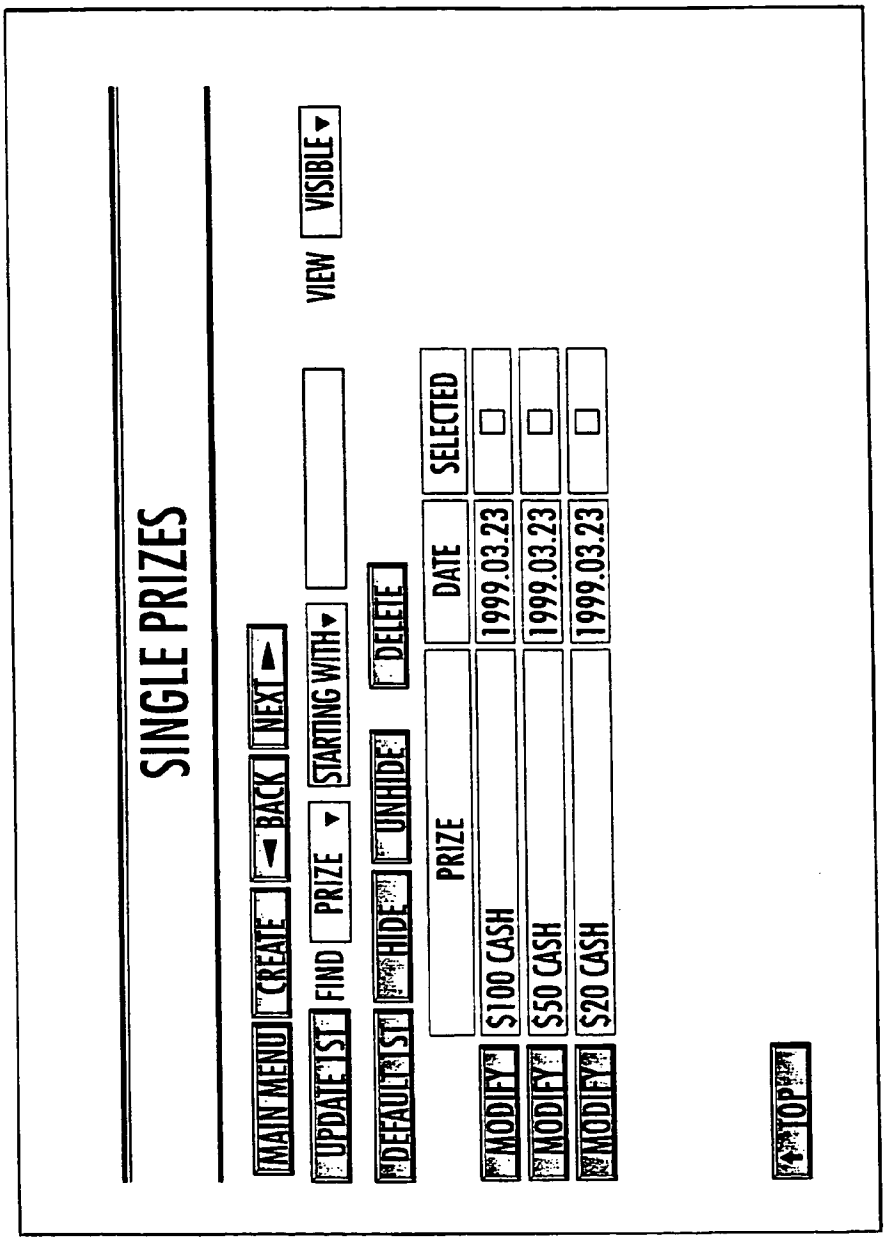

SINGLE PRIZES
MAIN MENU
CREATE
BACK
NEXT
UPDATE ST
FIND
PRIZE
STARTING WITH
VIEW
VISIBLE
DEFAULT ST
HIDE
UNHIDE
DELETE
PRIZE
DATE
SELECTED
MODIFY
$100 CASH
1999.03.23
MODIFY
$50 CASH
1999.03.23
MODIFY
$20 CASH
1999.03.23
TOP

FIG. 11b.

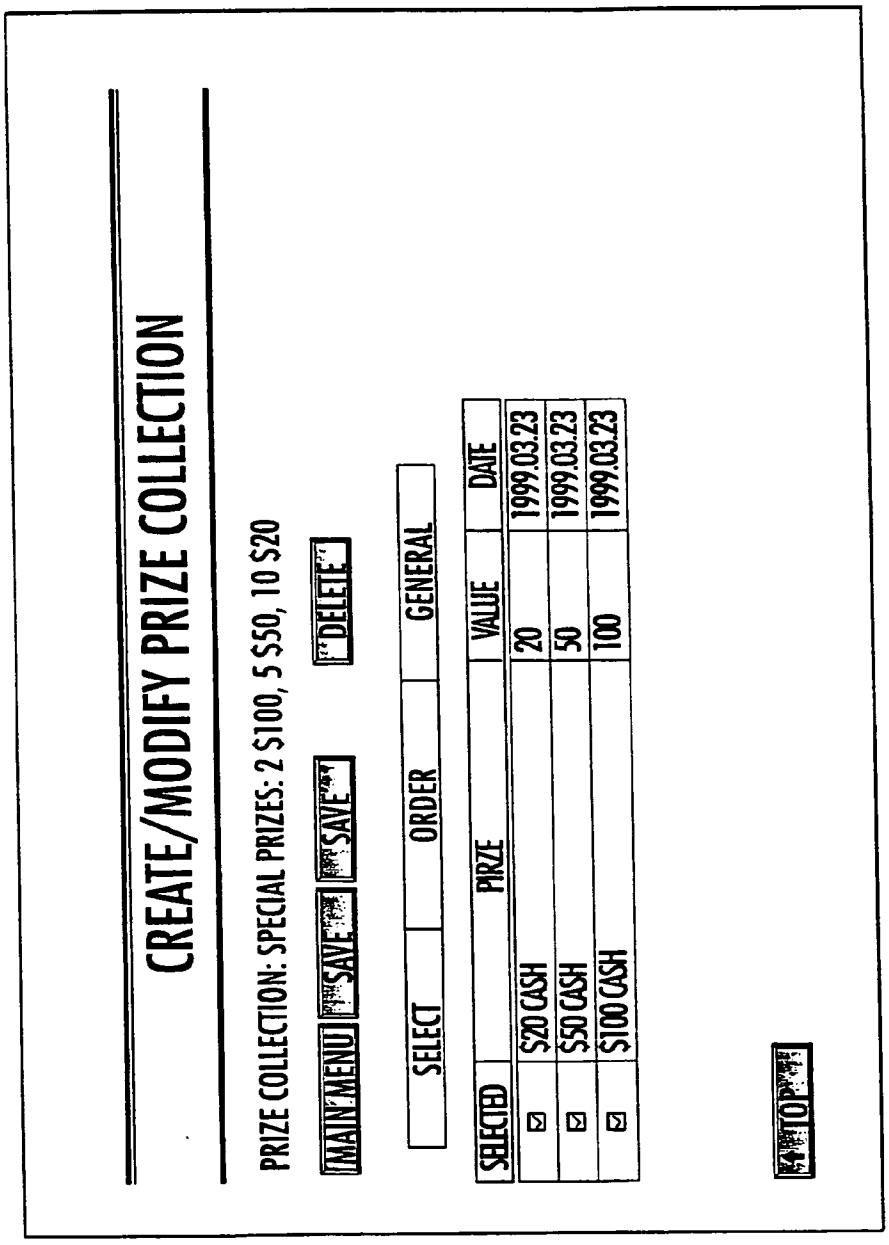

CREATE/MODIFY PRIZE COLLECTION
PRIZE COLLECTION: SPECIAL PRIZES: 2 $100, 5 $50, 10 $20
MAIN MENU
SAVE
SAVE
DELETE
SELECT
ORDER
GENERAL
SELECTED
PRIZE
VALUE
DATE
$20 CASH
20
1999.03.23
$50 CASH
50
1999.03.23
$100 CASH
100
1999.03.23
TOP

FIG. 12.

CREATE/MODIFY SURVEY INSTANCE

START DATE: MONTH 3 DAY 25 YEAR 1999
END DATE: MONTH 3 DAY 26 YEAR 1999
SURVEY/CONTEST TYPE: SPECIAL SURVEYS
PRIZE COLLECTION: SPECIAL PRIZES: 2 $100, 5 $50, 10 $20
QUESTION COLLECTION: XYZ COMPANY SATISFACTION SURVEY: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION|XYZ COMPANY|1999|03|04 4 QUESTIONS

☑ SHOW SPONSOR

INSTRUCTIONS
☑ SHOW INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS:

FOR SPECIAL SURVEYS AND OTHER CONTESTS
SHOW URL ☑
URL HTTP://
URL DESCRIPTION

FOR SPECIAL SURVEYS ONLY
SURVEY CODE: xyz- CS-S

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO PROMPT FOR:

FIELD 1:	PLEASE ENTER YOUR SOCIAL	○ OPTIONAL ◉ REQUIRED
FIELD 2:	PLEASE ENTER YOUR EMAIL	◉ OPTIONAL ○ REQUIRED
FIELD 3:		◉ OPTIONAL ○ REQUIRED

☐ BYPASS REGISTRATION

TOP

FIG. 13.

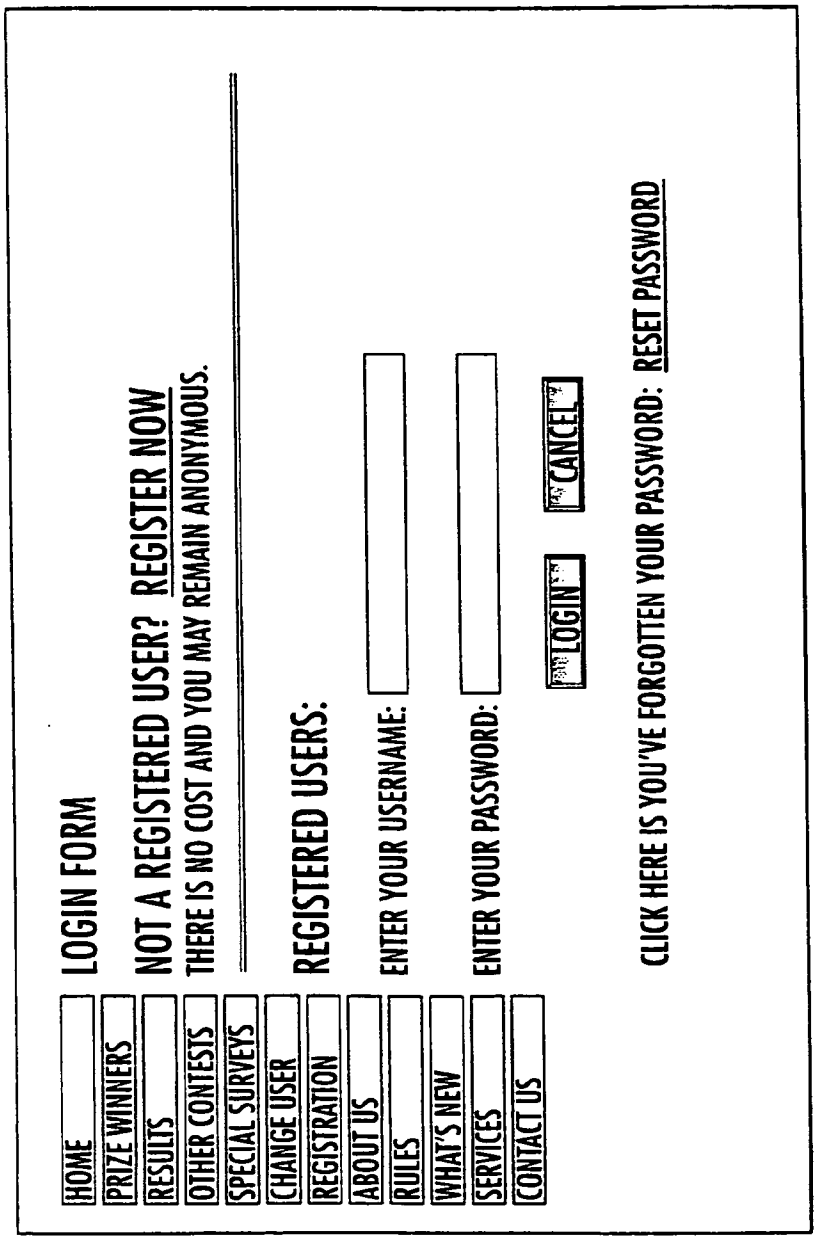

HOME
PRIZE WINNERS
RESULTS
OTHER CONTESTS
SPECIAL SURVEYS
CHANGE USER
REGISTRATION
ABOUT US
RULES
WHAT'S NEW
SERVICES
CONTACT US
LOGIN FORM
NOT A REGISTERED USER? REGISTER NOW
THERE IS NO COST AND YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS.
REGISTERED USERS:
ENTER YOUR USERNAME:
ENTER YOUR PASSWORD:
LOGIN
CANCEL
CLICK HERE IS YOU'VE FORGOTTEN YOUR PASSWORD: RESET PASSWORD

FIG. 14.

HOME
PRIZE WINNERS
RESULTS
OTHER CONTESTS
SPECIAL SURVEYS
CHANGE USER
REGISTRATION
ABOUT US
RULES
WHAT'S NEW
SERVICES
CONTACT US

REGISTRATION FORM

REGISTRATION FORM

PLEASE ENTER A USERNAME. IF YOU WIN A PRIZE, THE NAME YOU SELECT WILL BE DISPLAYED IN THE PRIZE WINNERS' SECTION OF THE SITE

USERNAME

PLEASE ENTER A PASSWORD. PASSWORDS MAY CONTAIN LETTERS, DIGITS AND THE UNDERSCORE CHARACTER.
PASSWORDS MUST CONTAIN AT LEAST 6 CHARACTERS.

PASSWORD CONFIRM PASSWORD

A SECRET QUESTION THAT YOU PROVIDE WILL BE USED IF YOU FORGET YOUR PASSWORD. THE CORRECT ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION WILL BE REQUIRED TO RESET YOUR PASSWORD.

SECRET QUESTION

SECRET ANSWER

PLEASE PROVIDE THE LAST FOUR DIGITS FOR ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

LAST FOUR DIGITS OF SELECT FROM LIST ▼ IS

PLEASE ENTER AND CONFIRM YOUR YEAR OF BIRTH. THE YEAR OF BIRTH IS USED TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR THE CERTAIN CONTESTS.

BIRTH YEAR (YYYY) CONFIRM (YYYY)

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

SEX
SELECT FROM LIST ▼

NUMBER OF CHILDREN
SELECT FROM LIST ▼

FIG. 15a.

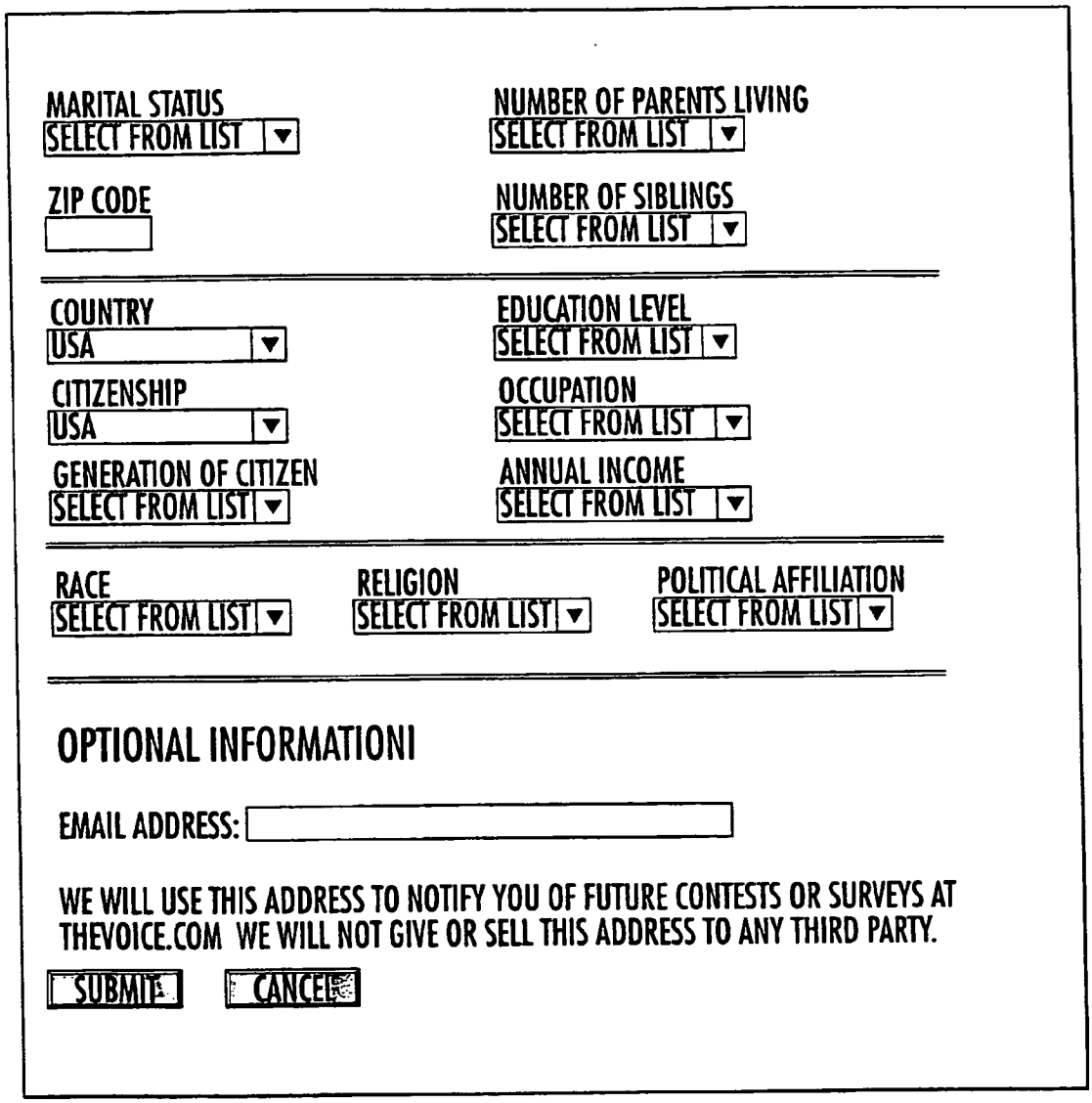

MARITAL STATUS
SELECT FROM LIST
NUMBER OF PARENTS LIVING
SELECT FROM LIST
ZIP CODE
NUMBER OF SIBLINGS
SELECT FROM LIST
COUNTRY
USA
EDUCATION LEVEL
SELECT FROM LIST
CITIZENSHIP
USA
OCCUPATION
SELECT FROM LIST
GENERATION OF CITIZEN
SELECT FROM LIST
ANNUAL INCOME
SELECT FROM LIST
RACE
SELECT FROM LIST
RELIGION
SELECT FROM LIST
POLITICAL AFFILIATION
SELECT FROM LIST
OPTIONAL INFORMATION!
EMAIL ADDRESS:
WE WILL USE THIS ADDRESS TO NOTIFY YOU OF FUTURE CONTESTS OR SURVEYS AT THEVOICE.COM WE WILL NOT GIVE OR SELL THIS ADDRESS TO ANY THIRD PARTY.
SUBMIT
CANCEL

FIG. 15b.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/14967

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) :G06F 17/60
US CL :705/10

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/10

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EAST, WEST, DIALOG, INTERNET

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	Decisive Technology: Parent of Ziff-Davis and COMDEX Takes Equity Stake in Decisive. M2 Presswire. 12 June 1996, especially page 2.	1-23
X,P	Brochure released by Decision Analyst, Inc. 29 July 1999, especially pages 2-5.	1-23
A,P	Decision Analyst, Inc. Company History (Retrieved from Internet: http://www.decisionanalyst.com). 28 July 1999, page 1.	1-23
A	Your Opinion Could Finally Be Worth Something. Chicago Tribune. 30 April 1997, page 1.	1-23

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. [ ] See patent family annex.

*	Special categories of cited documents:	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E"	earlier document published on or after the international filing date	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search
18 OCTOBER 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report
20 NOV 2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US
Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Box PCT
Washington, D.C. 20231
Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230

Authorized officer
Peggy Hamod
TARIQ HAFIZ
Telephone No. (703) 305-9643

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1998)★

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US00/14967

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A,P	List of Online Research Web Pages (Retrieved from Internet: http://www.ircontech.com). 27 July 1999, pages 1-2.	1-23
A,P	American Consumer Opinion Poll Panel News (Retrieved from Internet: http://www.acop.com). 27 July 1999, page 1.	1-23
A,P	American Consumer Opinion Information Page (Retrieved from Internet: http://www.acop.com). 27 July 1999, pages 1-2.	1-23
A	FUSARO, ROBERTA. Mail Moods. Computer World. 17 August 1998, page 14.	1-23
A	Bulletin Board Posting Re: Unsolicited Email Legislation (Retrieved from Internet: http://www.i-m.com). 10 February 1996, pages 1-2.	1-23
A	Bulletin Board Posting Re: Online Focus Groups? (Retrieved from Internet: http://www.i-m.com). 13 October 1995, page 1.	1-23
X,P	Esearch Fact Sheet. 29 July 1999, pages 1-3.	1-23
X	Information About E Search (Retrieved fron Internet: http://www.esearch.com). Last modified 16 February 1999, pages 1-10.	1-23
X,P	Serranos Customer Survey (Retrieved from Internet: http://austin.data.net). 21 June 1999, pages 1-2.	1-23